

Firsts in Law

Annette Abbott Adams - First woman to hold office as U.S. assistant attorney general (1920); first to be U.S. district attorney (1918); first to be assistant U.S. attorney (1914).

Florence Ellinwood Allen - First woman on the U.S. Court of Appeals (1934); first on the Ohio Supreme Court (1922); first on any general court (1920).

Violette N. Anderson - First African American woman admitted to the Supreme Court Bar (1926).

Lyda B. Conley - First Native American woman to argue before the U.S. Supreme Court (1910).

Mary H. Donlan - First woman to be editor-in-chief of a law review (1919); first to be appointed to the federal bench from New York state (1955).

Susan Brandeis Gilbert - First daughter of a Supreme Court justice to argue a case before the Supreme Court. Her father, Louis D. Brandeis, who served from 1916 to 1939, absented himself in this case (1925).

Sarah Tilghman Hughes - First woman federal judge to swear in a U.S. president (1963).

Ada Kepley - First woman to receive a law degree from an accredited institution (1870), Union College of Law (now the law school of Northwestern University).

Belva Lockwood - First woman lawyer admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court (1879), the first woman to argue a case before the Supreme Court (1880).

Lucile Lomen - First woman clerk of the Supreme Court (1944).

Arabelle Mansfield - First woman to be admitted to the bar (1869 in Iowa).

Burnita S. Matthews - First woman to serve as a federal district judge (1949). She engaged only women as her clerks.

Esther Morris - First woman justice of the peace (1870).

Sandra Day O'Connor - First woman Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court (1981).

Roberta Ramo— First woman elected President of American Bar Association (1995)

Charlotte E. Ray - First woman to graduate from Howard Law School (she disguised her sex by applying as C.E. Ray); first black woman in the United States to earn a law degree (1872).

Kathryn Sellers - First woman to be head judge of a juvenile court (1918).

Susie M. Sharp - First woman elected Chief Justice of a state supreme court in a popular election (1975).

Sources: The Book of Women's First by Phyllis J. Read and Bernard L. Witlieb; Sisters in Law: Women Lawyers in Modern American History by Virginia G. Darchman; Supreme Court Decisions and Women's Rights edited by Clare Cushman.